STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI

Re: *Amendment of Part 2 of the Commission's Rules for Federal Earth Stations Communicating with Non-Federal Fixed Satellite Service Space Stations; Federal Space Station Use of the 399.9-400.05 MHz band; and Allocation of Spectrum for Non-Federal Space Launch Operations, ET Docket No. 13-115, RM-11341.*

For the record, it's only coincidence that this is on the agenda the week before the new Star Trek movie – and that it is my final meeting item.

While we associate rockets and space exploration with TV, movies, and science fiction, the fact is the economic potential of the commercial space industry is large and real, and today we're taking a big step to spur growth in U.S. commercial space launch services and make the U.S. more competitive in this growing global marketplace.

The commercial space launch industry encompasses human spaceflight, research, education, and so much more.

Thanks to powerfully innovative American companies like SpaceX, commercial launches are becoming increasingly common, and are expected to increase significantly over time.

SpaceX, for instance, currently has more than 40 launches on its manifest.

Several billion dollars' worth of U.S. commercial space launch activity is scheduled, and this industry has already created thousands of jobs directly, and many more indirect jobs in related industries.

From a global competition standpoint, the U.S. is moving in a strong direction, and rapidly. At the start of 2012, America's global share of launches to geosynchronous orbit was zero percent. Within two years, it's projected to top 30 percent.

So where does the FCC fit into this equation?

Companies can't launch or operate space vehicles without spectrum.

Operators need spectrum to communicate with space vehicles, to receive and send data, and to destroy rockets if necessary.

We have been facilitating commercial launches on an ad hoc basis, as NASA ramps down in this area and commercial space launches ramp up.

With today's Notice the U.S. is leading the way in developing transparent rules for commercial space launches – rules that will provide certainty and predictability for this important and growing industry.

This Notice, along with guidance released earlier this year on how to obtain special temporary authority for commercial launches, are aimed at streamlining processes, eliminating unnecessary burdens and increasing predictability for spectrum needed for commercial space launches.

This action will help boost U.S. leadership in the commercial space industry, and make the U.S. more competitive in the global marketplace for space launch services.

Specifically, this item will ease access for commercial operators to spectrum used for communications services to control, monitor, and track launch vehicles.

This is an important first step towards enabling commercial operators to directly obtain licenses needed for use during launches, using a well-defined application and coordination processes.

The item also seeks input on the long-term communication and spectrum needs of the commercial space sector.

The item also proposes to better facilitate federal government use of commercial satellite services.

The fixed satellite service is the backbone of the U.S. commercial satellite industry and is widely used for a variety of commercial and Federal government services.

Today, federal earth stations obtain interference protection only under the umbrella of a commercial licensee.

The item proposes to provide federal earth stations with interference protection directly when communicating with commercial satellites.

In addition, the item proposes to make a small amount of spectrum available for a new Federal mobile satellite system.

The Commission is committed to supporting the commercial launch sector, while working with our federal partners to successfully share the spectrum required for space launches, and to enable their use of commercial satellite services.

Thank you to Renee Gregory in my office, and OET, IB, and WTB for your great work on this item.